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## **Bourdieu, Relationality, and Entrepreneurial Practices: Mentorship in Ottawa and Waterloo, Canada**

**Abstract:** Economic geographers have struggled over how to address the role of culture in economic processes without resorting to either structural determinism or agent-centric rationality. While culture is commonly seen as an institution affecting economic processes, there has been little consideration regarding the mechanisms connecting cultural outlooks within individual practices and actions. This paper links the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu with relational economic geography and practice perspectives in order to study how cultural outlooks develop within regions and influence the practices of entrepreneurial actors. Culture is seen a process through which actors understand the world around them rather than an isolated and static social entity. This framework is used to examine the patterns of entrepreneurial mentorship in Waterloo and Ottawa, Canada. A qualitative analysis of 72 semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs, investors, and economic development officials is used to analyse the usage of entrepreneurial mentors within the two cities. The paper argues that the significant differences in both the rates and dynamics of mentorship between the two cities are the result of different cultural outlooks towards mentorship that have developed within each region, which in turn have fostered distinct beliefs about the value of mentoring and entrepreneurship. A process-based view of culture helps to de-centre the region as the primary influencer of entrepreneurial action and allows for more nuanced discussions about the relationships between cultural outlooks and entrepreneurial practices.

**Key words:** Entrepreneurship; Culture, Bourdieu, Practice; Relational Economic Geography

## 1. Introduction

The discipline of economic geography has struggled over how to address the role of culture within regional economies. While the cultural turn of the 1990s brought culture back into studies of the economic landscape, the relationships between culture and economic action remain under-theorized (Sayer, 1997). Culture is too often seen as a ‘black box’ that affects economic practices while remaining opaque to critical analysis (Warf, 2012). Such perspectives lead to impoverished explanations of human activity that lack a way to theorize the mechanisms that cultural outlooks with the actions and practices employed by individuals as part of their daily lives. Understanding the connections between culture and action are key to studying the geographies of entrepreneurship. Though the tendency for new ventures to cluster in particular regions is well known, there is a debate over how much of this variation is due to structural economic factors such as the availability of human capital and how much is connected with a region’s cultural environment. Previous research suggests cultural and social factors play a critical role in the number of nascent entrepreneurs willing to take the risks of starting up their own firm. However, the processes through which these cultural outlooks influence entrepreneurs’ practices remain unclear.

The goal of this paper is to explore the underlying processes linking social structures such as culture with the individual practices that entrepreneurs employ on a daily basis. Using the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu as a starting point, the paper develops a practice-based model of entrepreneurial cultures in order to investigate the processing connecting regional and industrial cultures with the economic and social practices entrepreneurs employ as they build and grow their firms. This a relational, practice-oriented model that highlights the connections between local and non-local influences on the entrepreneurship process. This model is used to examine the use of mentors by technology entrepreneurs in Ottawa and Waterloo, Canada. Despite the near-universal agreement about the importance of having a

mentor within technology entrepreneurship communities, there are substantial differences between the two regions in both the number of entrepreneurs with mentors and the nature of these relationships. This is not simply the outcome of particular local cultures but the result of entrepreneurs' unique position within overlapping social contexts, and how they understand the 'rules' of these contexts. A Bourdieuan approach provides a useful framework within existing relational models to explain the connections between local and non-local influences on individual action while still retaining the importance of individual agency.

The next section provides an overview of how the geography and culture of entrepreneurship has been understood within the economic geography literature. The third section discusses the use of culture in economic geography and provides a critique of the existing dominant frameworks used to conceptualize it: institutions and embeddedness. Section four introduces the work of Pierre Bourdieu and examines its use in studying the geography of entrepreneurship. The comparative case studies of entrepreneurial mentorship in Waterloo and Ottawa, Canada are introduced in section five. Section six places these differences in a Bourdieuan framework. Section seven discusses the implications of the empirical findings followed by the concluding section which suggests future research direction for Bourdieuan-influenced notions of culture.

## **2. Culture and the Geography of Entrepreneurship**

Researchers have long noted the tendency for entrepreneurs to cluster but have disagreed what causes this concentration. The policy implications of this debate has contributed to a substantial interest in the geography of entrepreneurship within both economic geography as well as the broader fields of entrepreneurship research and economics (Fritsch and Storey, 2014). While there is general agreement in the literature that dynamic, growing economies will help spur higher rates of entrepreneurship due to the

availability of more opportunities (Capello, 2002, Glaeser et al., 2010), others have argued that high levels of human capital and entrepreneurial skills in the labour force are also necessary (Acs and Armington, 2004, Mueller, 2006). High growth entrepreneurship also depends on the presence of other resources such as angel investment, mentors, advisors, and public investment in innovation infrastructure (Patton and Kenney, 2005, Glaeser, 2007, Malecki, 2009).

The availability of these resources creates a virtuous cycle in which successful ventures improve a region's entrepreneurial environment, fostering more entrepreneurial activity (Stam, 2010). But entrepreneurs do not have equal access to local resources. Entrepreneurs depend on their social networks to find resources like financing, knowledge about new opportunities, and specialized business advice (Stuart and Sorenson, 2005). These networks are densest within the entrepreneurs' home region due to frequent face-to-face interactions that build trust and reciprocity (Schutjens and Völker, 2010). This suggests that entrepreneurs must be deeply embedded in localized social networks in order to get the resources necessary to start and grow a firm (Dahl and Sorenson, 2012). The presence of these attributes helps to create entrepreneurial environments that help to spur the creation of new firms and provide the resources and support necessary for these ventures to survive and grow (Spigel, 2015).

The culture of a place is a key component for creating and sustaining supportive entrepreneurial environments (Licht and Siegel, 2006). As Kibler et al. (2014 p. 995) argue, "scholars have increasingly devoted attention to investigating the role of regional culture as a determinate of entrepreneurship." However, research on the relationships between culture and entrepreneurship have been criticized for poor methodological foundations and lack of evidence about the actual role of culture in supporting venture creation (Beugelsdijk, 2007, Glaeser and Kerr, 2009). This is particularly true of quantitative studies in which culture is

measured through survey data or used as a proxy for nationality. In response to these criticisms, a new wave of entrepreneurship research has adopted institutional perspectives to provide a more integrative understanding of the role of culture in the entrepreneurship process (Dodd, 2002, Hayton and Cacciotti, 2013). This is a social constructivist approach that places the development of new ventures within overlapping cultural, economic, and political environments (Steyaert and Katz, 2004). This suggests that the entrepreneurship process is not a universal economic phenomenon but is rather deeply entwined in the geographic, social, and cultural context it takes place within (Zahra, 2007).

From this perspective, localized cultural outlooks affect the regional entrepreneurship process in two ways. First, cultures that legitimize and encourage innovative and risk taking increase the overall supply of entrepreneurs as well as their ability to identify and exploit opportunities in the marketplace (Stuetzer et al., 2014). This legitimation is produced by successful ventures demonstrating the economic and social rewards of high-growth entrepreneurship. Second, these same processes of legitimation encourage other actors to support new ventures. A local culture supportive of entrepreneurship helps justify the decisions of informal angel investors to take on the substantial risk of investing in early stage companies as opposed to more traditional types of investment (Maula et al., 2005, Überbacher, 2014). However, cultures that discourage risk taking and innovation can act as a barrier to entrepreneurship by delegitimizing creating and supporting new ventures and preventing knowledge sharing and cooperation (Staber, 2007).

The availability of mentors is one way in which a region's culture influences the entrepreneurship process. Mentors provide entrepreneurs with advice, guidance, connections, and potential early stage investments (Bosma et al., 2012). A positive cultural associated with mentorship will increase the likelihood that experienced business people will want to take the time to mentor younger entrepreneurs. The presence of mentors in a region is linked with

higher rates of startup activity, both due to mentors' encouragement of nascent entrepreneurs and their ability to legitimize entrepreneurial endeavours (Lafuente et al., 2007, Mungai and Velamuri, 2011). Mentors contribute to the survival and success of startups through both their direct advice and access to social networks as well as the emotional support and encouragement they provide (Gibson, 2004). The entrepreneur-mentor relationship is a complex social bond embedded within local cultural perspectives. The entrepreneur will want assurance that the mentor's advice will add value to the firm, and the mentor will want to see that some of her advice is implemented by the entrepreneur and may also ask to invest in the company at a below-market rate. The decisions over the having or being a mentor are made within a cultural context about the value of entrepreneurship as an economic and social activity.

### **3. Culture and Practice within Economic Geography and Entrepreneurship Research**

#### *3.1. Development of Cultural Perspectives in Economic Geography*

While the importance of culture to the geography of economic activity is widely acknowledged there is less consensus over the processes through which this influences occurs. Economic geographers have struggled to explain role of culture in regional economic processes such as labour markets, innovation, and growth. Does culture cause economic action to occur or does it simply reflect past social and economic actions? Part of this confusion is the result of unclear understandings of the term within broader disciplinary debates. Economic geographers have faced major conceptual and empirical changes balancing these two perspectives (Shields, 2001, James et al., 2007). The processes through which culture affects economic practice remain vague and ill defined, relying on thin description with little claim to generalizability or policy relevance (Markusen, 1999). Furthermore, the relationships between individual practice and processes of cultural change and reproduction within a region are poorly defined (Gertler, 2004, Gertler, 2010). These

difficulties contribute to a 'black box' view of culture, where culture is seen as a homogeneous force immune to critical inquiry or change (Warf, 2012).

There has been a substantial evolution in how economic geographers have approached questions of culture. Geographers in the 1980s reacted to dissatisfaction with both the mathematical essentialism of the Quantitative Revolution and the class essentialism of Marxist geography by focusing on questions of economic structure and agency (Barnes, 1989). This work explored the extent to which a 'universal' economic geography of capitalism could exist as opposed to a more focused approach that examined "the flow of human agency as a series of situated events in space and time" (Thrift, 1983 p. 28). At the same time cultural geographers critiqued what they saw as deterministic perceptions of culture. Interventions by Duncan (1980) and Jackson (1989) among others argued that previous work had tended to treat culture as a real, concrete force that determines actions while remaining immune to critical inquiry or change. This argument was furthered by Mitchell (1995) who suggested that 'culture' by itself was ontologically meaningless and is better understood as a discourse or ideology.

Current thinking about culture amongst economic geographers built on this foundation as well as the debates about regional production systems in the 1980s and 1990s. The experience of regions such as the 'Third Italy' (Piore and Sabel, 1984) and Silicon Valley (Saxenian, 1994) pointed to the importance of a shared regional culture that supports cooperation and innovation in contributing to sustained regional economic growth. A shared culture reduces transaction costs, fosters untraded interdependencies, and contributes to the formation of territorialized production systems (Storper, 1997). Common cultural outlooks — be it a regional culture, a national culture, or an industrial culture — allows for greater cooperation and sharing of tacit knowledge between firms and individuals, adding the



development of clusters by supporting inter-firm learning and labour mobility (Henry and Pinch, 2001, Gertler, 2003).

Culture is often seen as a type of institution: an “accepted, existing pattern of interaction” common to a group of people or a place (Bathelt and Glückler, 2014 p. 340). Embeddedness is the main conceptual tool used within this literature to explain the connection between a region’s underlying cultural institutions and the practices occurring there. As originally described by Granovetter (1985), actors and firms are embedded in complex and overlapping social systems that constrain their potential activities. This helped reestablish the importance of the firm in understanding the evolution of regional economies, emphasizing the connections between firm strategy and regional context (Dicken and Thrift, 1992). Firms are embedded in territorial, organizational, and sector-specific cultural systems that frame their reactions to changes in the marketplace (Jones, 2008). Actors embedded in a particular place can form long-lasting bonds of trust within their local social networks that help them access resources they could not otherwise obtain. However, the strength of these ties can lead to becoming over-embedded, where the necessity of preserving these relationships reduces the actors’ freedom to build other, more profitable relationships (Uzzi, 1996).

### *3.2 Challenges to Geographical Perspectives of Culture and Entrepreneurship*

Institutional and embeddedness approaches are the most common ways economic geographers understand the relationships between culture and economic actions. However, there are several significant challenges that reduce their ability to explain the role of culture in specific economic activities such as entrepreneurship. First, institutional perspectives tend to ignore local heterogeneity and instead see just one factor, such as a regional or organizational culture, as the sole influencer on economic activities. As Gertler (2010 p. 5) argues: “one of the most common pitfalls of an institutional approach is the constant

temptation to want to 'read off' individual behaviour from national (or local) institutional structures.” Actors are affected by their institutional context but the institutions themselves do not cause particular choices. Within the economic geography literature this problem most often takes the form of prioritizing one source of cultural influence — typically location — over all others (Jones, 2008). Culture is frequently employed in homogenizing ways that ignores diverse cultural outlooks within a community and that reduce or eliminate the agency of actors (Raghuram and Strange, 2001). Few studies look at the intersection of multiple cultural influences, such as local cultures and the cultures that build up within organizations or market sectors. However, these overlapping cultural influences can have profound influences on economic practices, innovative activity, and firm performance.

Second, neither institutional nor embeddedness approaches have a clear process to link contexts with actors' individual actions. Granovetter's main argument was that economic activities are embedded in social contexts, but this says little about the ways in which these contexts influence action. James (2007 p. 395) contends that embeddedness is “under-specified” as a concept and does not fully explain the processes that link culture and action. Similarly, much of the embeddedness literature ignores wider arrays of institutional factors that go beyond the local scale and lacks a relational conception (Jones, 2008, Bathelt and Glücker, 2011). Embeddedness is a ‘fuzzy’ concept that does not develop clear argument about how actors develop their actions within complex social and economic contexts while still retaining the agency to experiment with new approaches (Hess, 2004).

The critiques have motivated recent developments in relational and practice-based approaches to economic geography. Relational economic geography has sought to de-centre the region as the primary unit of analysis in favour of a perspective that acknowledges the influence of a broader array of influences within and outside of the region (Bathelt and Glücker, 2003, Bathelt and Glücker, 2011). This approach emphasizes that actors retain the

agency to experiment with new strategies based on their individual context rather than space itself having causal power (Boggs and Rantisi, 2003). This approach emphasizes two factors that are often ignored in existing cultural analyses of regional entrepreneurial activity. First, the influence of forces outside the region on the entrepreneurship process, such as knowledge flows from other hub of innovation or the financial ties connecting local investors with international sources of capital. Research on regional entrepreneurial activity has tended to take the region in isolation from other sources of influence such as global industrial trends, power relations, knowledge pipelines, and larger cultural influences (Bathelt et al., 2004).

Second is the micro-level foundations of entrepreneurial activity. Research on the geography of entrepreneurship has tended to use the region as the primary unit of analysis, with entrepreneurial activity being seen as the outcome of regional characteristics such as economic or cultural structure. This gives quasi-casual power to space, robbing individual actors of the agency to experiment with new approaches, perspectives, and practices (Bathelt and Glückler, 2011). This is particularly troubling when studying entrepreneurs, who by definition must transgress existing norms and structures in order to succeed. While they are influenced by regional factors such as the availability of human capital and localized cultural outlooks, they possess the ability to identify new opportunities by leveraging their social connections and unique insights.

Relational approaches align with recent work on practice-based perspectives in economic and institutional geography (Jones and Murphy, 2011, Jones, 2014). Activities such as knowledge spillovers and venture creation are not disembodied flows of resources but predicated on individual, daily practices. This perspective is important in the study of entrepreneurship, as the ability of entrepreneurs to develop new business practices is a cornerstone of the success of new ventures (Johannisson, 2011). As with relational geography, these practices are embedded not only in regional institutional contexts but also in

transnational business networks, economic systems, and ethnic and cultural morals as well as micro-institutions such as the organizational culture of an office or firm. The practices employed by individuals are highly dependent on the social context in which they occur, which can legitimize or delegitimize certain choices and create unspoken norms of practice (Jones, 2014).

In the absence of a theoretical process connecting social practice with larger social contexts, concepts like culture quickly revert to a ‘black box’ beyond critical analysis, contributing to overgeneralized assumptions about culture that ignore heterogeneous outlooks and practices. As James (2005, 2007) argues, accounts of the role of regional, national, or ethnic culture in economic processes have largely relied on vague and ill-defined mechanisms to connect culture and action, and these mechanisms crowd out the role of agency and experimentation. Existing approaches make it difficult to account for multiple sources cultural influence, such as the relationships between a region’s local culture and the organizational culture of a major employer. Despite relational critiques of this work, popular approaches like embeddedness provide little room for experimentation by individual actors or the relationships between their actions and their larger institutional contexts. As a result, research on the role of regional culture has tended to privilege casual explanations for its influence on activities such as entrepreneurship.

#### **4. Bourdieuan Approches to Entrepreneurship**

##### *4.1 Bourdieuan Theories of Practice*

These issues create a need for an alternative approach to culture strikes a balance between cultural structure and individual agency as well as highlight the processes through which culture influences action. Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of practice provides such an approach. Bourdieu’s work views practices — the actions employed by actors as part of their daily lives — as the result of both the rules of the social systems they inhabit as well as their

internalized understanding of those rules (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In the context of this study, entrepreneurs employ practices that they believe make sense given their goals and knowledge of their social context (Tatli et al., 2014). At the core of Bourdieu's work is the argument that structure and agency are entwined rather than dichotomous; social structures like culture do not determine actors' practices but instead create a context in which actors develop a variety of practices in pursuit of their multiple goals.

The practices of entrepreneurial actors take place within ordered systems of social relations and power hierarchies called 'fields' (Bourdieu, 1977). These rules represent a practical sense of what practices are both possible and sensible. Bourdieu (1990) likened fields to the rules of football. The game's rules provide a context for action by describing the size of the pitch and the duration of play. Some rules are formally codified (who can control the ball with their hands) while others are more informal (what is considered poor sportsmanship). Within these rules, players can employ near-limitless strategies in the pursuit of their (literal) goals, including breaking formal rules, such as by faking an injury, if they feel it provides an advantage.

Practices are directed towards the accumulation of capital, broadly defined as any labor appropriated on an individual basis (Bourdieu, 1986). This expansive view that includes economic capital (money), social capital (resources in a social network), cultural capital (knowledge of social rules), and symbolic capital (prestige associated with certain professions). The value of these capitals depends on the field they are used within. While the main goal of entrepreneurship is normally assumed to be economic capital in the form of the profits, this is not always the case (Pret et al., 2015). Some entrepreneurs' are more focused on social achievement, such as making a globally recognized innovative product, than they are on purely economic motivations. The symbolic capital attached to the creation of an

innovative firm is often just as valuable to an entrepreneur as the economic capital it produces.

Entrepreneurs understand the rules and social hierarchies of a field as well as the value of the different forms of capital through their habitus: their internalized knowledge of and dispositions towards the field (Swartz, 1997). Through their habitus actors develop an implicit understanding of which types of practices are likely to be successful given their comprehension of the field's rules and their own position within it (Bourdieu, 1977). An individual's habitus reflects his or her position within a field, so that: "tastes and dispositions structure the individual's subjective actions and experience." (Hallett, 2003 p. 130) This leads to different forms of practices appearing sensible to actors with different habitus, such as the decision of an entrepreneur to aggressively pursue outside investment to spur growth as opposed to growing the firm through internal revenues alone. This decision is based not just on an entrepreneur's business situation but also her goals and how she understands the entrepreneurship process.

Within a Bourdieuan framework, culture is best understood as the stabilized patterns of practice that develop through actors' habitus-based understanding of the fields they operate within. While actors can and do violate the rules of a field, these violations go against the 'sensibilities' of the culture and therefore reduce violators' legitimacy in the eyes of others, making it harder for them to acquire the resources they need to start and grow the firm. Culture can therefore be described as a process through which actors develop a practical understanding of what types of practices make sense given their knowledge of a field and their habitus-informed goals. This description addresses problems associated with the lack of a process connecting cultural embeddedness with economic action by demonstrating how actions emerge from actors' strategic understanding of their position within a field rather than simply a result of the rules themselves.

There is a growing interest amongst entrepreneurship scholars about how Bourdieu can be used to understand the construction of entrepreneurial legitimacy (de Clercq and Voronov, 2009a, de Clercq and Voronov, 2009b, de Clercq and Voronov, 2009c, de Clercq and Hoing, 2011, Stringfellow et al., 2014). Legitimacy is seen as a form of symbolic capital entrepreneurs need in order to attract support such as outside investment, mentorship, or long-term customers. This capital is not created by following a list of practices spelled out in entrepreneurship textbooks; entrepreneurs must develop a habitus that allows them to understand the unwritten rules about entrepreneurial legitimacy while at the same time signalling their dynamism by violating some of them (de Clercq and Voronov, 2009b). Those without this kind of entrepreneurial habitus — who have not experienced the field of high-growth entrepreneurship or been inculcated with its rules — will not be able to strike the fine balance between conforming to and diverging from the norms of entrepreneurial behaviour and will therefore be unable to acquire the resources they need.

Bourdieu's work aligns with relational and practice-based views of economic geography and helps resolve the tensions between regional structure and individual agency found in institutional and embeddedness approaches (Hite, 2005, Jones and Murphy, 2010, Tatli et al., 2014). A practice perspective is critical in the study of phenomenon like entrepreneurship because it help to shift the focus from the outcome (e.g. creation of high growth ventures) to the practices that underlie these outcomes (Johannisson, 2011). It is particularly important for disentangling local and non-local cultural influences in the entrepreneurship process and for developing a relational perspective of regional entrepreneurship (Jones, 2014). The micro-focus on how entrepreneurial practices emerge from individual motivations and positions within fields helps avoid issues around cultural determinism. But despite the usefulness of Bourdieuan perspectives on the geography of

economic activity, geographers have largely only drawn on Bourdieu's work on social capital rather than his broader body of work (Painter, 2000, Holt, 2008)

#### *4.2. The Fields of Technology Entrepreneurship*

The entrepreneurial process occurs across many different fields. The fields of the entrepreneur's upbringing and education, the organizational fields of their customers and suppliers, the field encompassing the norms associated with technology entrepreneurship, and the local field in which the firm is developed will all influence the practices the entrepreneur employs as they start and grow their firm. All of these fields operate at different geographic scales. But despite their obvious spatial metaphor, Bourdieu gave very little consideration to their actual geography (Painter, 2000, Holt, 2008). There is no clean separation between a place-based field and the national or global fields associated with a particular industry, sector, or ethnic group (Fligstein, 2001). Spigel (2013) argues that a field's scale can be understood through the practices that constitute and reproduce it. Fields are reproduced by the individual practices and actions carried out by the actors that make up that field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). If these practices are carried out predominantly by people within the same region, this can be considered a local field. Similarly, if the practices that reproduce a field are performed by those in the same global industry, this could be understood as an industrial field. Thus entrepreneurial actors are responsible for the reproduction and transformation of the fields affecting entrepreneurship.

Floysand and Jakobsen (2010) argue that a Bourdieuan approach provides a relational perspective on activities such as innovation and entrepreneurship by showing how individual actors develop their own strategies and practices within multiple overlapping fields. Business owners must "operate in status combinations, in which they construct, maintain, and change [their] processes of interaction in line with the role of conduct they can legitimate in a given field" (Floysand and Jakobsen, 2010 p. 333). The increasing time-space



compression of the globalized economy means that business owners are increasingly exposed to fields beyond their local region, especially those connected with transnational production networks. Entrepreneurs develop their habitus within this complex environment of overlapping fields — many of which have conflicting or mutually incompatible rules and norms — and must develop particular skills in navigating between them.

When studying entrepreneurial practices two fields are of particular importance, the local field and the Technology Entrepreneurship Field (TEF). The local field represents the power relations, norms, and common understandings that build up in a place over long periods of time in response to the economic and social changes of a place. Histories of entrepreneurial (and not entrepreneurial) regions have shown how particular actions, such as risk tolerance and informal investment, can become normalized within a region's populous (e.g. Saxenian, 1994, Feldman, 2001). This field is crucial because many of the actors involved in the entrepreneurship process — including the entrepreneur herself, early stage investors, mentors, employees, and other supporters — are located in the same region and therefore influenced by the same local field. The creation and growth of a new venture depend on the day-to-day practices of these actors, which in turn are developed within the context of their local field. Within the local fields, certain practices and goals are prioritized while others are deemed illegitimate. For example, some local fields may attach a great deal of symbolic capital to building a highly innovative new venture that attracts substantial investment even if it takes years to generate revenue while in other fields this activity might be seen as too risky and other actions, like creating a firm that quickly generates substantial profits for the entrepreneurs, produce more symbolic capital.

The TEF represents the norms and expectations associated with being a high-tech entrepreneur. This field is produced by global narratives of the entrepreneurship process, often associated with a hegemonic 'Silicon Valley' style of high-growth entrepreneurship and

delivered through ‘entre-tainment’ such as shows like *Dragons Den*, hagiographic profiles of technology entrepreneurs, and popular entrepreneurship books (Dodd et al., 2013, Swail et al., 2014). Within this field, new norms of working have developed that normalize both entrepreneurs and employees taking on more personal risk in a ‘flexible’ in a highly mobile labour market and working within non-hierarchical workplaces with few strict job roles (Neff et al., 2005, Neff, 2012). Mentorship is a particularly important practice within the TEF. Having a mentor helps establish entrepreneurs’ legitimacy and provides them with a valuable tool to develop business skills. Prominent entrepreneurship organizations such as the Kauffman Foundation promote mentorship as a key part of the startup process, and biographies and profiles of successful technology entrepreneurs invariably mention their early mentors.

Entrepreneurs’ habitus develop in relation to these fields. Learning how to be an entrepreneur involves more than business knowledge, they learn about what it means to be an entrepreneur by talking with and observing other entrepreneurs (Aldrich and Yang, 2013), working at startups (Roach and Sauermann, 2015), and consuming entrepreneurial media (Swail et al., 2014). For example, a nascent entrepreneur might take a startup class and read book about entrepreneurship when she is a university study and after graduation work at a tech startup. After she leaves to start her own firm, she will talk with other entrepreneurs at local networking events where she finds a successful firm founder to act as her mentor. These activities help her learn about the norms and expectations associated with entrepreneurs and why types of actions (including how to dress, present her business, and interact with other entrepreneurs) are expected of her and helps develop her entrepreneurial habitus. These different ways of learning about entrepreneurship exist in different fields, affecting how their lessons are absorbed into actors’ habitus and the practices that emerge from them. The ‘entre-tainment’ found in the media is embedded in the TEF and helps normalizes certain practices

such as intensive networking and certain goals like being acquired by a major technology company. However, interactions with nearby entrepreneurs and advisors takes place within the local field, where other types of practices and outlooks might be normalized, such as maximizing the time spent with one's family as opposed to the new venture. This might discourage attending afterwork networking opportunities.

This creates the potential for conflict between the norms of the local field and the TEF. For example, there is an expectation within the TEF that entrepreneurs will go long time before taking a full salary from their venture while norms within the local field might prioritize quick economic returns to support one's lifestyle. Entrepreneurs must find a way to employ practices that make them appear to be legitimate and deserving of resources based on the expectations that exist within the different fields they operate within (de Clercq and Voronov, 2009a). An entrepreneur cannot simply pick one field to adhere to; other actors whose support they depend on will base their decisions on who to help or invest in based on a definition of legitimacy created at the intersection of the TEF and local fields. For instance, a local angel investor is influenced by both stories produced within the TEF about the wealth creation made possible by early stage investment while at the same time be influenced by an aversion to failure and risk that is part of the local field. They might not invest in an entrepreneur who does not adhere to the norms of the TEF because they do not seem like a high growth prospect but at the same time they might also avoid investing in an entrepreneur who is too embedded in the TEF and who does not adhere to the structures of the local field because they seem difficult to work with. To get this investment, the entrepreneur must effect practices that simultaneously help them achieve legitimacy in both the TEF and local field. A successful entrepreneur must, in Bourdieu's (1977 p. 8) words, be a "virtuoso with a perfect command of his 'art of living' [who] can play on all resources inherent in the ambiguities and

uncertainties of behaviour and situation in order to proceed the actions appropriate to each case.”

Mentorship represents a bundle of practices that take place in the overlapping contexts of the local field of the entrepreneur and mentor and the larger TEF. Within the TEF having a mentor who is herself a successful entrepreneur is taken as a sign of legitimacy and helps the entrepreneur further build her entrepreneurial habitus. However, this is not always the case in a local field, where mentorship can be meaningless or have different connotations of legitimacy. Entrepreneurs will base their decision about if the time and effort of building a relationship with the mentor is justified given how they judge the importance of mentorship within the local field and TEF and their habitus-based understanding of their goals as an entrepreneur.

Because the majority of the actors involved in the entrepreneurship process (such as the entrepreneur, early-stage investors, mentors, and workers) are in the same local field, its influence will significantly influence how the non-local fields are interpreted and how individuals define what legitimate entrepreneurship entails within the context of these fields. This is due to the overriding importance of the local field within actor’s habitus; unlike other non-local fields, the rules and structures of the local field are ever-present in daily life and influence both business and social activities. This is particularly true for actors who have lived in the region for a majority of their lives and who expect to engage with their local field long after their current business actions are concluded. This makes the structure of the local field critical in how entrepreneurs, investors, and mentors develop their understanding of what entrepreneurship is and what types of practices it entails.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the local field acts as a filter through which the rules and norms of other fields are interpreted as actors develop their practices. While this model aligns with the view of Floytsand and Jakobsen (2010) that actors operate within multiple fields, it

emphasizes the importance of locally-based fields in the construction of individual habituses and how the rules and power relationships of non-local fields are understood. For example, many entrepreneurs form their entrepreneurial identity by interpreting an idealized vision of Silicon Valley (in essence, the TEF) through their own local characteristics (Larson and Pearson, 2012, Gill and Larson, 2014). They seek to build an entrepreneurial identity that incorporates both the norms of the TEF while still conforming to local cultural expectations about entrepreneurial risk as well as other characteristics such as gender, age, and lifestyle. The TEF is interpreted through the 'lens' of an actor's locally developed habitus. Because actors' habitus are developed within their local field, their responses to the rules and structures of non-local fields is coloured by the practices that make sense locally. While actors can and often do transgress local norms, going too far outside the structures of local field will make it hard for them to build the relationships with others necessary with accessing important entrepreneurial resources and connections.

\*\*\*Figure 1 around here\*\*\*

A Bourdieuan framework provides a way to explain the connection between culture and individual economic actions while avoiding the problems of cultural determinism. Actors operate within fields that have social rules, norms, and conventions that they understand through their habitus. They are not forced to follow these rules but they must develop their practices within the context of multiple fields in order to acquire the resources and capitals they need to successfully achieve their goals. This gives actors space to experiment with new practices and helps resolve the tension between the agency of individual entrepreneurial actors and the structural role of their economic and cultural contexts. The integration of multiple local and non-local fields helps avoid the temptation to over-focus on local factors at the expense of other factors such as industrial cultures, global economic systems, and national and ethnic cultures. This provides a more relational perspective that incorporates the

different influences on the entrepreneurship process. This avoids the tendency to overemphasize the role of one local culture and promotes a holistic view of the factors influencing the entrepreneurship process.

## **5. Local Fields and Entrepreneurship in Waterloo and Ottawa**

### *5.1 Methods and Locations*

The cities of Waterloo and Ottawa, Ontario are two of Canada's strongest entrepreneurial economies. Both boast large pools of skilled workers and experienced entrepreneurs, research-oriented universities, and networks of successful startup founders and investors with the potential to be effective mentors. They occupy similar places in Canada's economic and urban hierarchy and have identical legal and financial systems. As such, differences in entrepreneurial practices between the two cities are more likely to be related to localized factors rather than economic or legal variations. In order to study the relationships between local cultural outlooks and entrepreneurial practices, seventy-two semi-structured interviews were conducted with entrepreneurs, investors, and economic development officials in Waterloo and Ottawa between June and December 2012 (see Table 1). Entrepreneurs were drawn from a pool of firms in five software-related sectors created through Scott's Industrial Directory. After eliminating consultancies, firms older than twenty years, and those whose original founder had left, 84 firms were contacted in Waterloo and 83 in Ottawa, producing response rates of 27% and 35% respectively. These response rates compare favourably with other interview-based entrepreneurship research projects and unlike snowball sampling or key informant interviews this method produces a more representative sample population and avoids a bias towards more successful or well-connected firms (Baker and Edward, 2012). Additional interviews were conducted with local investors and economic development officials to triangulate findings from interviews with entrepreneurs.

\*\*\*Table 1 Around Here\*\*\*

## 5.2 *Waterloo*

Waterloo is frequently held up as one of Canada's most dynamic entrepreneurial environments (Bramwell and Wolfe, 2008). The region is a hub of high-tech entrepreneurship in software, telecommunications, and industrial control sectors (Bathelt et al., 2013). While smartphone designer Blackberry (formally known as Research in Motion) is the most prominent locally founded technology firm, other local startups have also grown into internationally competitive ventures. Many of these entrepreneurial successes are linked with the University of Waterloo (UW), which has a reputation as a world-leading entrepreneurial university that has contributed to the region's entrepreneurial culture (Bramwell et al., 2008). At the centre of this entrepreneurial community is Communitech, a local economic development agency that supports local entrepreneurial activity through programs like an entrepreneurs-in-residence program that provides advice for new entrepreneurs, peer-mentorship groups that bring together CEOs of firms at various stages of growth to discuss common problems, as well as programs that match new entrepreneurs with experienced mentors. Networking events organized by Communitech provide a forum for young entrepreneurs to interact with and observe their more experienced counterparts.

These programs and organizations reflect a local field that creates symbolic capital for actors associated with the formation of an innovative venture and which normalizes the risks associated with these activities. The local field is reproduced through the entrepreneurial orientations of UW, Communitech, and their associated programs as well as the continued prominence of successful technology entrepreneurs in the local media and larger society. Its structure has been highly influenced by the TEF, which is incorporated into the local field through the success of local entrepreneurs who adhered to the rules of the TEF as well as the influence of popular entrepreneurship media within the high-status startup community. Its structure supports a vibrant culture that encourages potential entrepreneurs to embrace the

risks of starting their own firm and influences successful entrepreneurs or business people to take the time to mentor and invest in these new entrepreneurs.

### *5.3 Ottawa*

As the seat of Canada's government, the public sector has dominated Ottawa's economy for more than a century. However, in the late 1960s and 1970s federal research labs set up in the region helped to spur the creation of a telecommunications cluster through talent attraction and spinoff creation (Harrison et al., 2004). The research conducted in these labs and at the University of Ottawa helped create numerous technology startups and spinouts. One firm in particular, Mitel, became a critical part of the region's entrepreneurial mythos. After being acquired by British Telecom in 1986, founders Terry Matthews and Michael Copland went on to create other fast growing technology firms such as Newbridge Networks and Corel Software. Matthews is notable for his support for entrepreneurs — his Newbridge Affiliates Program acts as an angel investment fund for young entrepreneurs, helping to create over 90 local firms (Mallet, 2004). However it was Nortel Networks, which originated as the research division of a regional Bell affiliate and later grew into one of the world's largest telecommunications technology companies, that launched Ottawa as a global centre of technology development and entrepreneurship. Large firms like Nortel, prominent government laboratories, and fast-growing startups helped attract a growing pool of engineers and technologists to the region as well as multiple venture capital firms. This growth was aided by the Ottawa-Carleton Research Initiative (renamed Invest Ottawa in 2012), a regional economic development agency charged with supporting local technology entrepreneurship.

The collapse of the technology bubble in 2001 contributed to a breakdown of the region's entrepreneurial economy that led to a fundamental shift in the nature of the local field with many local investors and entrepreneurs now shunning the risks of creating new growth-oriented startups (Spigel, 2011). As a result of these changes, the value of the



symbolic capital of entrepreneurship has been reduced within Ottawa's post-crash field, leading new entrepreneurs to embrace strategies that involve fewer risks but also fewer opportunities for growth. This transition contributed to a change within the local field that no longer sees high-growth, high-risk entrepreneurship as the norm and now encourages low-risk startup practices that preserve entrepreneurs' ability to spend time with their family and friends.

## **6. Differing Uses of Mentors in Waterloo and Ottawa**

### *6.1. Empirical Results*

Entrepreneurs' use of mentors can be examined on two levels: the number of entrepreneurs who reported having a mentor and the social practices they employed to create and maintain the relationship. As shown in Table 2, 12 of the 23 (52%) entrepreneurs interviewed in Waterloo reported having a mentor compared with 7 of 29 (24%) in Ottawa. Differences in the use of mentors between growth-oriented entrepreneurs and lifestyle entrepreneurs (those who favour firm stability over the risks of expansion) are insignificant as were the differences between the use of mentors by first time and serial entrepreneurs. The average age of an entrepreneur with a mentor was 39.3 years compared to 48.1 for those without ( $t = 3.18, p < .01$ ), but as there is not a significant difference between either the ages of entrepreneurs or the age at which they started their firms between the two cities ( $t = 1.27, p = 0.21$ ), this does not impact the measured mentorship rate. Since none of the interviewed entrepreneurs reported meeting a mentor through a specific mentorship program the role of these programs be disregarded. The difference in use of mentors appears to be more connected to nature of the local field and its relationship to the TEF than demographics or local entrepreneurship programs.

\*\*\*Table 2 around here \*\*\*

There are also substantial differences in the practices that comprise the mentor-protégé relationship. Entrepreneurs in Ottawa tended to have mentors with whom they had preexisting social ties such as family members or business colleagues. Of the seven entrepreneurs in Ottawa with mentors, six (85%) had preexisting relationships with their mentors, meaning the mentor was a major part of their social network prior to launching the business. One was mentored by his father (also a partner in the firm), two were mentored by family friends, and the mentors of three more were former business partners or employers. These mentors tended to be family members or friends who had business experience rather than successful entrepreneurs with more relevant experience. Only one entrepreneur did not know her mentor before founding the firm. In this case she was introduced to the mentor by an investors. The entrepreneur had just moved from Waterloo the behest of her investor. This suggests the entrepreneurs in Ottawa did not look beyond their pre-existing social network for mentorship. Using pre-existing connections helps form the long-term, trust-based mentorship relationships, but this practice also means that their mentors are less likely to have the highly specialized business experiences that would make them more effective. Entrepreneurs in Ottawa appear to be happy to have a mentor if one is easily accessible, but there is little evidence that they are willing to expend their limited social capital or time to find one. None of the interviewees in Ottawa reported actively using their social connections or networking events hosted by local economic development agencies to find a mentor.

In Waterloo, only three of the twelve (25%) entrepreneurs with mentors had pre-existing connections with them before starting their firm. The rest met their mentor after the firm was founded, some through networking and advisory services organized by Communitech, some with help from an investor, and others with the advice of older entrepreneurs they met during the startup process. In many cases, Waterloo entrepreneurs reported having multiple mentors. One entrepreneur stated that: “I would say I have a dozen

maybe more mentors that I go to for various things depending on where their experiences are. I have a guy that when I negotiate leases, he's the guy to go to for that kind of thing."

(Interview W117)

The practice of actively searching for a mentor was common amongst entrepreneurs in Waterloo. Active searching suggests that the entrepreneur felt that having a mentor was an important part of his or her development as a firm owner and was willing to purposefully develop and employ their social capital to find one. Active searches involve practices such as attending networking events specifically to find a mentor, meeting with more experienced entrepreneurs, or scanning their extended social networks for potential mentors. For example, entrepreneurs in Waterloo reported meeting mentors through forums such as a public speaking club, an adult education class, and a church, while another entrepreneur described how a former landlord became one of his mentors:

Some [of my mentors] were just people that I always looked up to and I went up to them one day and I asked if they had thoughts about what I'm doing and does it makes sense or do you see any pitfalls. ...One particular individual was my landlord at one of our previous locations. We developed a friendship and a relationship.

(Interview W125)

Others discussed how they searched for investors who could provide mentorship in addition to financing, with several entrepreneurs saying they looked for early-stage investors who could also mentor them. This suggests that mentorship has a high enough social status within the local field to encourage entrepreneurs to dedicate their limited time and resources to finding one.

## *6.2 Symbolic Capital and Mentorship*

The different amounts of symbolic capital connected with mentorship within the local field in the two cities and how this impacts their understanding of the TEF underlie the observed differences in mentorship rates and the practices constituting these relationships. Having a mentor has more symbolic value in Waterloo's field than in Ottawa's, as evidenced

by the importance entrepreneurs placed in having or finding a mentor in Waterloo. This aligns with the TEF's norms, meaning most entrepreneurial actors in the region hold similar views about the value of mentorship in the entrepreneurship process. The region's entrepreneurs are more willing to employ their social capital by actively searching within and outside of their existing social networks to get the benefits of mentorship. These practices are almost completely normalized in Waterloo's field. Many entrepreneurs saw the region as having a "pay-it-forward atmosphere [where] guys who have been through it are willing to sit down with you and help." (Interview W117) Similarly, an economic development officer believed that the region's business leaders saw mentorship as a community responsibility and that: "a number of them volunteer considerable amount of time to mentor the next small business venture. Because sometimes it's not about cash, it's about having really good guidance and access to the right people." (Interview W107) The support for networking, mentorship, and cooperation at all levels of the region's business community create a high level of symbolic capital both for having a mentor — helping the entrepreneur appear more legitimate — and for the mentor by increasing his or her social status within the community.

The high symbolic value of mentorship in Waterloo is reproduced through formal and informal organizations and networks that bolster the importance of networking and mentorship as a way to learn valuable business skills. The success of entrepreneurs who had mentors from the community helps reproduce the importance of mentorship within the field. Communitech and the University of Waterloo host frequent networking events that allow entrepreneurs to connect with potential mentors. This simultaneously allows entrepreneurs to find mentors outside of their pre-existing social networks and raises the social status of mentors within the community. The formal groups and more informal communities of entrepreneurs within the region normalize the practice of active networking: the willingness of entrepreneurs to spend more time seeking out the advice and insight of others within the

community to solve technical and business challenges. This helps instil, in the words of one entrepreneur: “A strong sense of not just a desire, but a responsibility, to help up and coming companies, especially technology companies” (Interview W114).

Mentorship is not necessarily an unusual practice within Ottawa’s field but it is not seen as an important part of the entrepreneurship process. Neither Invest Ottawa nor the local universities dedicate as much effort to mentorship promotion as their counterparts Waterloo. For example, Invest Ottawa’s mentorship program does not connect entrepreneurs with outside mentors or advisors, but rather it provides a single point of contact within the organization to answer business questions. As described by an OCRI official: “Mentoring is a bit of a misnomer....what we mean when we talk about mentoring is really answers.”

(Interview O101) While Ottawa’s Terry Matthews is perhaps Canada’s most successful serial entrepreneur and investor, he maintains a low profile in Ottawa’s entrepreneurial community. Though interviewees reported he is approachable at public events, few saw him as an example of someone they would like to emulate. This can be compared to Waterloo, where respondents frequently cited the founders of Blackberry as inspirations. The low levels of symbolic capital associated with mentorship reduces entrepreneurs’ willingness to employ their social capital by actively seeking out a mentor outside their pre-existing social networks. As a result there is little incentive for successful business people to become mentors, for entrepreneurs to seek out mentorship, or for organizations to invest their limited resource in creating mentorship programs like those found in Waterloo. These factors all combine to reproduce the low symbolic capital of mentorship in the Ottawa field despite its importance in the TEF. Entrepreneurs in Ottawa still depend on others for informal assistance but it is rare for these contacts to grow into deeper mentoring relationships. As one Ottawa entrepreneur observed: “There’s lots of people that you will meet that are willing to sit down and chat for an hour or two hours over a coffee or a beer and share experiences and

provide guidance. But a single person...on a kind of a longer term basis? Definitely not.”

(Interview O108) This suggests that entrepreneurs are aware of the importance of mentorship due to the influence of the TEF, but that due to the structure of the local field very few of them believe that the symbolic capital it will take to find a mentor is worth the cost of time and other resources.

### *6.3 Habitus and Mentorship within Multiple Fields*

Stating that the nature of Waterloo’s local field causes higher rates of mentorship and Ottawa’s field lowers those rates would simply re-introduce the lack of agency and absence of a mechanism to connect social context with individual action found within existing cultural analyses. In reality the situation is complicated by the relationship between the local field and the broader TEF which influences how entrepreneurs think about their personal goals. The TEF promotes mentorship as a normal part of the entrepreneurship process by creating a high level of symbolic capital for having a mentor and being a mentor. This value is communicated through entrepreneurship books, magazines, and websites and stories of successful entrepreneurs who got their first big break with the help of a trusted mentor. Entrepreneurs absorb these ideas while developing their initial business idea or through their education in university, internalizing the importance of mentorship as they develop their entrepreneurial habitus.

The strength of this message in Waterloo is amplified by its local field that also creates high levels of symbolic capital for having and being a mentor. But in spite of the structures of both fields many entrepreneurs in Waterloo do not have the habitus of a high-growth entrepreneur, meaning that they see entrepreneurship more as a way to generate a stable income than as a path to wealth or a way of expressing their creativity and drive. Entrepreneurs with this ‘lifestyle’ habitus exhibited a different understanding of their local field, which affected their use of social resources within the field. For example, the founder

of a microchip firm was turned down for an opportunity for support and mentorship through one of UW's technology incubators because he did not project the willingness to grow his firm as quickly as was expected of him: "I was actually going to get this [help] from the University of Waterloo – they offered Accelerator Centre space. I was going to get that space, but I was turned down. The reason is that they are simple: we don't grow very fast and they want us to grow much faster and they don't believe we can." (Interview W123) The choice not to pursue a mentor is not necessarily a purposeful decision but a more subtle one based on entrepreneurs' habitus-based understanding of their goals. One entrepreneur explained that: "I've thought about [why I don't have a mentor], but I can't place it....You just end up so deep into it, you can't look out. It's not like you're planning to take after someone" (Interview W110).

An inverse process is viable in Ottawa. Entrepreneurs in Ottawa are exposed to the same TEF as their counterparts in Waterloo. Many entrepreneurs who are focused on building a growth-oriented, technically advanced venture absorbed these ideas into their habitus through their education and consumption of entrepreneurial media. However, the unimportance of mentorship within their local field means that it was difficult to find a mentor even if they wanted one. As one explained, "I didn't really have the benefit of having anybody as a mentor during those years. It would've helped," (Interview O131) while another said: "I would have liked that and I didn't have the opportunity to have this particular model or to have somebody to support me. That's something I would've liked." (Interview O111) Instead these entrepreneurs looked to entrepreneurial paragons like Steve Jobs or Bill Gates for inspiration. In the words of one technology entrepreneur: "There's a lot of people that I admire, but the only role model that I have is someone who is a true entrepreneur." (Interview O119) The logic of mentorship — of having someone to inspire them and to provide advice and support at critical junctures — made sense to these entrepreneurs given

the influence of the TEF, but they adjusted their practices within the technology entrepreneurship field to compensate for the fact that mentorship is not highly valued within the local field. Instead of actively employing their social networks to find a local mentor they turned to biographies of famous entrepreneurs to inspire them.

## **7. Discussion**

Mentorship is a complex bundle of economic and social practices. While having a mentor provides certain benefits to an entrepreneur there are also social and financial costs associated with having one. A technology entrepreneur's decision to employ the practices necessary to get a mentor is made within the context of the local field and the TEF. The TEF normalizes mentorship as an expected part of the technology entrepreneurship process. Local field create different amounts of symbolic capital to mentorship based on the region's economic and social history. This overlapping field structure creates the context in which individual entrepreneurs decide (consciously or non-consciously) what types of mentorship practices they want to adopt based on their own individual habitus, goals, and available social relations. This process is visible in the differences between how entrepreneurs used mentors in Waterloo and Ottawa. Entrepreneurs in Waterloo were more likely than their counterparts in Ottawa to have a mentor and to have found this mentor by actively searching outside of their pre-existing social networks. While entrepreneurs in Ottawa believed in the importance of mentorship, they were more likely to use famous entrepreneurs as a role model than have a personal mentor. As shown in Table 3 there are substantial differences in the types of practices associated with the mentorship practices and the structure of the fields connected with them.

\*\*\*Table 3 around here \*\*\*

These differences are not the result of a single local field but are the outcome of the complex relationships between a region's local field, the border field of technology



entrepreneurship, and the habitus of individual entrepreneurs. The connections between the rules of overlapping local and non-local fields along with how these rules are understood through actors' habitus create what is commonly understood as a local culture: the collective ways people understand the world around them. But the question is not if culture matters, it clearly does. There are significant differences in the cultural environments of Waterloo and Ottawa that lead to a divergence in the common entrepreneurship process between the two communities. But this in of itself provides little insight into the actual processes surrounding how cultures develop, operate and ultimately influence the actions of individual actors such as entrepreneurs and mentors. As a result, while the effects of the culture are readily observable it is more difficult to understand how this culture has affected the practices of individual entrepreneurs and how entrepreneurs have reacted to their cultural context.

Both Waterloo's and Ottawa's local field developed within the context of their economic, social, and political history. These fields reflect and comprise the institutional environment that underlie the entrepreneurship process, including both formal public programs designed to train entrepreneurs and the more informal social networks between entrepreneurs and personal understandings of the goals and purposes of entrepreneurship itself. In turn, these institutional structures help create the symbolic capital associated with mentorship. The high symbolic capital of having a mentor in Waterloo encouraged entrepreneurs to adopt the networking practices required to find mentors outside their pre-existing social circles who could provide specialized business advice and guidance. This field is reenforced by both global entrepreneurship media embedded in the TEF as well as local organizations such as Communitech and the University of Waterloo who help normalize having a mentor and practices such as active networking through their events and programs. The symbolic capital of mentorship is lower in Ottawa's field, leading entrepreneurs to prefer

to dedicate their time to other aspects of the entrepreneurship process rather than engaging in active networking to find a mentor.

The local field does not operate in isolation. Entrepreneurs within both cities are affected by the same TEF. This field supports and normalizes the act of having a mentor through vectors such as media profiles of entrepreneurs. But entrepreneurs interpreted the TEF differently based on their local field and their habitus. The synergy between Waterloo's local field and the TEF reproduces the importance of mentorship and of a particular type of growth-oriented entrepreneurship. The symbolic capital created by mentorship in both fields encourages the development of formal programs that support mentorship, which in turn increases the willingness of entrepreneurs to expand the time and social capital necessary to develop a relationship with a mentor. Entrepreneurs in Ottawa are exposed to the same TEF as their counterparts Waterloo. However, their reaction to the rules of this field is influenced by a habitus that is developed within the context of a local field that deprioritizes mentorship. As a result, while many entrepreneurs in Ottawa expressed a desire to have a mentor, very few chose to employ the practices required to expand their social networks to find one which were more common in Waterloo.

Waterloo and Ottawa's local fields are not a deterministic cause of the mentorship practices found there. This is evidenced by the fact that even in a field such as Waterloo's only a slight majority of interviewed technology entrepreneurs reported having a mentor. Those with mentors employed a variety of practices to cultivate this relationship based on the resources they have at their disposal and their position within the field. For example, some entrepreneurs in Waterloo depended on networking events organized by Communitech to expand their network while others used more informal techniques to find a mentor, such as finding one within their church or business classes at a local community college. This suggests that entrepreneurs are able to experiment with a variety of different practices in

order to obtain a resource — namely mentorship — that they think is important to the continued survival and growth of their firm. Similarly, some entrepreneurs in Ottawa actively built up their networks but instead of using that social capital to find a mentor they were content to get business advice through more informal discussions with other entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs chose the practices that made sense to them given their relationship to their local field and the TEF and their own habitus-based beliefs about what their goals were as entrepreneurs.

## **8. Conclusion**

The concept of culture by itself cannot explain why every entrepreneur did not adhere to dominant cultural prescripts within their region or the TEF nor can it sufficiently explain how entrepreneurs arrived at their individual decisions either to have or not have a mentor and the practices they used to build a relationship with that mentor. This is a consequence of the difficulties current approaches in economic geography have in accounting for the heterogeneity of practices found within the same institutional context and the role of both local and non-local cultural and institutional influences. We know culture has an effect but we are unsure how this effect materializes. A Bourdieuan approach offers an alternative conceptual framework to address these issues. Incorporating research developments in relational economic geography, it helps to avoid the tension between structure and agency that is so prevalent in present cultural analyses by locating the development of practices at the intersection of the objective rules of social fields and individual actors' understanding of these rules through their habitus. This creates an explicit process linking practices with cultural and economic contexts. Actors choose practices that make sense to them given their goals and understanding of the 'rules' of the fields they encounter. Some of these choices might be strategic ways to take advantage of perceived indeterminacies or they may copy other successful practices they observe. Second, this approach avoids the tendency to

overemphasize the importance of local forces by acknowledging the role of multiple fields within the entrepreneurship process. Some of these fields are based within a particular region while others linked with global narratives about technology entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs and other actors must navigate the often conflicting structures of these fields in order to achieve their goals. While the local field plays a crucial role in how individual actors understand the rules of outside fields, they are still free to experiment with practices that they think work within the context of both the TEF and the local field .

The Bourdieuan approach is a relational perspective that brings together localized social and economic structures with complementary and contradictory forces that exist elsewhere. It draws attention to the overlapping influences affecting actors and creates a micro-level analysis of how individual practices help to create and reproduce broader regional economic and social environments. While the local field has an outsized influence on entrepreneurs' practices because they draw most of their resources from others embedded in that field, other fields like those of technology entrepreneurship, their industry, and their ethnic and social backgrounds, will also influence their choice of practices and the development of their habitus. But individual entrepreneurs still retain the agency to experiment with new practices, which if successful can help transform their local field and change its relationship with other, outside fields.

While economic geographers have made compelling arguments about the influence of culture, the examination of the processes through which culture influence actors' daily economic and social practices remain underdeveloped. A Bourdieuan approach avoids the persistent problems of structural determinism or atomistic agency that are often found implicitly or explicitly in discussions of culture. It instead highlights the connections between cultural outlooks and individual agency in the emergence of unique patterns of entrepreneurial practices and the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems. This allows for

an examination of how cultural norms are established within a community relative to non-local cultural and economic influences. Thus, while a Bourdieuan approach adds conceptual complexity, it allows for a more rigorous analysis of how actors choose their practices in response to a multitude of cultural, economic, and social factors and how these choices help create distinctive regional economic structures.

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*Table 1: Number and Location of Interviews*

	Entrepreneurs	Investors	Economic Development Officers	Total
Waterloo	23	5	4	32
Ottawa	29	8	3	40
Total	52	13	7	72

*Source: Interviews*

*Table 2: Use of Mentors by Entrepreneurs in Waterloo and Ottawa*

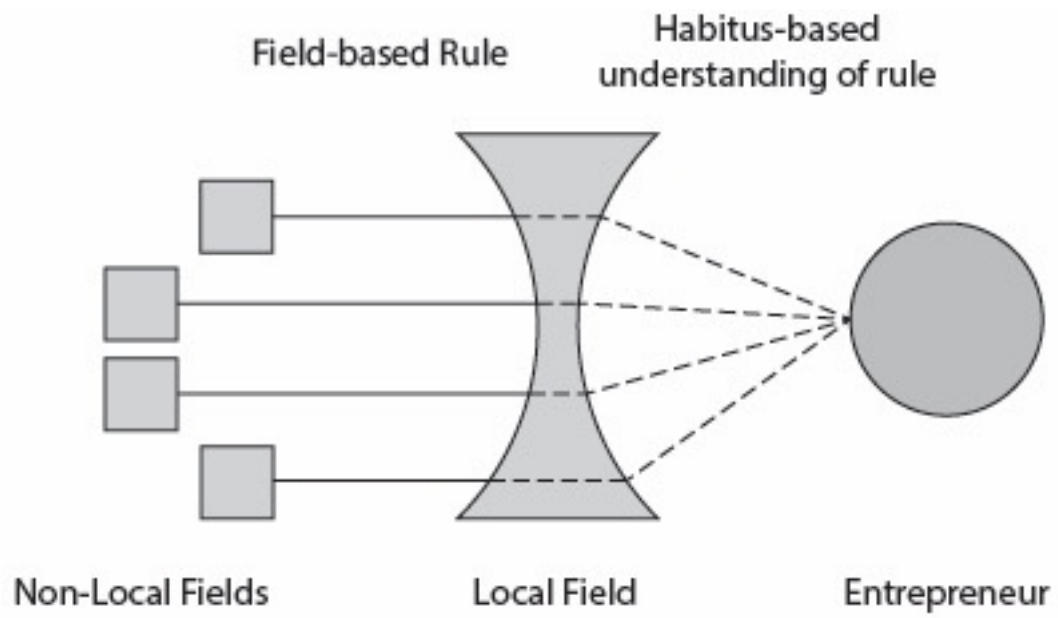
	Ottawa	Waterloo	Growth Oriented Entrepreneur	Lifestyle Entrepreneur	Serial Entrepreneur	First Time Entrepreneur
Mentor	7	12	11	8	8	11
No mentor	22	11	15	18	12	20
$\chi^2$ (p value)	3.233*		0.044		0.013	

\* - significant at  $p < .05$

*Source: interviews with entrepreneurs*

Characteristics	Ottawa	Waterloo
Mentor background	Mentors are predominantly family members or friends with some business experience.	Mentors are predominantly experienced business people, investors, or successful entrepreneurs.
Prior relationships with mentors	Entrepreneurs likely knew mentors before starting the business, either as a family member, close personal friend, or former business colleague.	Entrepreneurs more likely to have mentors they did not know before founding business or who were more distant social ties prior to firm formation.
Strength of mentor relationship	Relationships are typically stronger and based on deeper and longer-lasting social relationships.	Relationships are typically weaker and more focused on the business aspects of the relationships with fewer deeper social connections.
Method of obtaining mentor	Dependence on pre-existing social connections to find a mentor.	More likely to actively expand their social networks in order to find a mentor through both informal networking and attending networking events.
Symbolic capital of mentorship within local field	Lower symbolic value attached to the act of mentorship compared to other aspects of the entrepreneurship process.	High symbolic value of having a mentor created through local entrepreneurship programs and the field of technology entrepreneurship.
Relationship between local field and TEF	Low value of mentorship within local field conflicts with importance of mentorship within TEF. Leads to deprioritizing mentorship activities within formal programs despite informal desire for mentorship amongst some entrepreneurs.	Local field and TEF work in concert in order to promote mentorship within both formal entrepreneurship programs and informal networking activities.

*Table 3: Characteristics of mentorship practices and local fields in Ottawa and Waterloo*



*Figure 1: Relationships between local and non-local fields*